

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CCO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /031 W

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P 221402Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO USINT DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7967

S E C R E T BEIRUT 5763

EXDIS

JERUSALEM FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SY, OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: SHOOT-UP IN PALESTINIAN CAMP

REF: DAMASCUS 0822

1. LEBANESE NEWSMAN WELL KNOWN TO EMBOFF AS RELIABLE, PERCEPTIVE OBSERVER WITH EXCELLENT ACCESS IN SYRIA (AND GOOD FEDAYEEN CONTACTS) HAS PROVIDED EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNT OF MAY 20 SHOOT-OUT AT PALESTINIAN CAMP NEAR DAMASCUS. IN ORDER PRESERVE ACCESS IN SYRIA SOURCE NOT RPT NOT WRITING WHAT HE KNOWS AND WE NOT RPT NOT USING HIS NAME.

2. SOURCE TELLS US THAT SMALL GROUP OF 20-25 FEDAYEEN BELONGING TO PFLP/GC HAD BEEN SHOUTING SLOGANS GENERALLY HOSTILE TO HAWATMEH AND "PARTISANS OF SURRENDER" FROM TIME FUNERAL CORTEGE BEGAN ITS MARCH. TROUBLE ONLY BEGAN WHEN, JUST AFTER HAWATMEH BEGAN SPEECH, THIS GROUP SHOUTED "DEATH TO THOSE WHO INTEND SURRENDER PALESTINE". HAWATMEH REPLIED, "DEATH TO THOSE WHO WISH SEE AMERICAN AGENT, HUSSEIN, RECEIVE PALESTINIAN TERRITORY", PFLP/CG GROUP THEN BEGAN SHOOTING AND PFLP AND FATAH GUARDS AROUND HAWATMEH BEGAN SHOOTING AT PFLP/GC GROUP. SOURCE STATED THAT THIS EXCHANGE PRODUCED VERY FEW CASUALTIES, BEING MOSTLY FEDAYEEN BRAVADO. AT THIS POINT, SYRIAN SECURITY FORCES

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SOME IN PLAIN CLOTHES) OPENED UP ON EVERYONE WHO WAS FIRING:

FATAH, PDFLP AND PFLP/GC. RESULT WAS OVER 50 WOUNDED AND TEN OR SO KILLED, ACCORDING TO SOURCE. SOURCE CATEGORIC ON THIS POINT AND SAID HE FULLY AWARE IT RUNS COUNTER TO OFFICIAL SARG LINE. SOURCE SAID HE WAS TOLD LATER BY CONTACTS IN SYRIAN SERVICES THAT THIS WAS FIRST TIME THEY HAVE ENCOUNTERED SITUATION WHERE FEDAYEEN BEGAN SHOOTING AT EACH OTHER, AND THEY ALL MORE UPSET DUE TO PRESENCE OF SECRETARY KISSINGER. THEY CONSIDERED IT ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY SHOW FEDAYEEN THAT "SYRIA IS NOT LEBANON" AND GOVT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR AND FULL ABLE TO IMPOSE DISCIPLINE.

3. SOURCE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SARG JITTERY NOT ONLY OVER PRESENCE KISSINGER BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF INCREASING INTERNAL MALAISE. HE SAYS ALL OF ASSAD'S DETRACTORS ARE MAKING MOMENTARY COMMON CAUSE IN CRITICIZING HIM FOR HAVING AGREED, AT LEAST IN PRINCIPLE, TO DISENGAGEMENT WITH ISRAEL. FEDAYEEN COULD BECOME PART OF ANTI-ASSAD MOVEMENT AND IT PROBABLY APPEARED ESSENTIAL TO SARG SECURITY FORCES THAT THEY MOVE RAPIDLY TO ENSURE THAT NOTHING RPT NOTHING BE ALLOWED BREAK LOOSE INVOLVING USE OF FIREARMS BY OTHER THAN THEMSELVES.
GODLEY

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